

WHAT HAPPENS when a PATIENT LEAVES their Provider's office?

AN EXAMINATION OF TWO PATIENT PATHWAYS

A patient is struggling with heavy opioid use. They can't stop using but they want to. What happens next?

Providers can help patients looking to achieve their substance use goals such as maintaining abstinence. Check out two pathways for a patient who receives different resources that lead to two very different outcomes.

PATHWAY 1

Through compassionate and clear communication, a patient is given all tools and resources available to them in their recovery.

THEY RECEIVE:

- » Overdose prevention education materials

- » Naloxone

Referrals for:

- » Withdrawal management
- » Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- » Peer support
- » Mutual help groups (AA, NA, SMART Recovery)

They decide to go use at a friend's house so that someone is there in case of overdose.

The patient begins to experience an overdose. Their friend uses naloxone to save their life. The patient starts breathing again. Their friend takes them to the ER for more support.

The patient is seen next week in the office. They have received MOUD services with the help of their provider advocating for their needs.

PATHWAY 2

Through compassionate and clear communication, a patient is given tools and resources available to achieve abstinence.

THEY RECEIVE REFERRALS FOR:

- » Withdrawal management
- » Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- » Peer support
- » Mutual help groups (AA, NA, SMART Recovery)

The patient leaves and tries to access MOUD to support their transition to abstinence. They are unable to access a rapid initiation program.

The patient starts to experience withdrawal. They decide to return to unregulated substance use.

They get their substances from a new source they're unfamiliar with.

They use without knowing about changes to their tolerance or the supply.

The patient then has an unintended fatal overdose.

A memorial notice for the patient is seen next week on page 5 of the local paper.

When a patient is struggling with substance use, providers should ensure access to all tools and resources available to support recovery.

Striving for complete abstinence early in recovery can lead to dire consequences.